

Dear Interested Party:

Brucellosis is a bacterial disease that causes abortions in cattle and wild ungulates like bison and elk, and undulant fever in humans. The livestock industry has spent millions of dollars to eliminate brucellosis in cattle in the United States. The last remaining reservoir of brucellosis in the nation is wild ungulates in the Greater Yellowstone Area (GYA).

Recent outbreaks of brucellosis in two cattle herds in the GYA within Montana, which most likely came from wild elk, have caused Montana to lose its "Brucellosis Class Free" status. This will have a significant financial impact on livestock producers across the state.

The effects of brucellosis on the productivity of the elk population or species that prey on elk such as wolves and grizzly bears are unknown. However, no disease is beneficial to the host species.

Brucellosis in the GYA is not an "elk problem" or a "livestock problem." It is a disease problem that affects both elk and livestock. Reducing the risk of transmission of brucellosis within and between elk and livestock would benefit both wildlife and livestock interests.

Montana Fish, Wildlife and Parks (FWP) and the Montana Department of Livestock (DOL) are initiating efforts to lower the risk of transmission of brucellosis in the GYA. This may require changes in elk management, livestock management or both. A task force consisting of individuals interested in both wildlife and livestock, along with representatives from FWP and DOL, will meet over the next few months to develop recommendations for consideration by the agencies, the FWP Commission, the Board of Livestock and livestock producers.

The attached paper outlines the mission, make-up and charge to the Brucellosis Transmission Risk Reduction Task Force. If you would like to be considered for appointment to this task force, please complete and submit the enclosed application to either FWP or DOL by no later than October 15th, 2008.

Thank you for your interest in working to benefit both wildlife and livestock in Montana.

Sincerely,

M. Jeff Hagener, Director
Fish, Wildlife and Parks

Sincerely,

Christian Mackay, Executive Director
Department of Livestock